

## **An Accidental Scholar: Lessons Learned through the U.S. Women's Movement**

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In this essay, I trace my development as a scholar by linking my research to life experiences, focusing on my feminist activism. To accomplish this, I divide the essay into two parts. First, I offer a series of life stories focused on my feminism, and then connect those stories to how they fostered my understanding of the U.S. women's movement. This section draws on my keynote address at the 2018 #Persistence conference, held at St. Lawrence University. Second, I continue this linkage of personal experience and sociological understanding by developing the metaphor of feminism as a family instead of a wave. This metaphor developed, in part, from a career of observing the complexity, and at times messiness, of U.S. feminism. *[Article copies available for a fee from The Transformative Studies Institute. E-mail address: [journal@transformativestudies.org](mailto:journal@transformativestudies.org) Website: <http://www.transformativestudies.org> ©2019 by The Transformative Studies Institute. All rights reserved.]*

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### **SECTION 1 – Life and Lessons Learned**

Implicit in the idea of persistence is the notion of continuity; that is, how we persevere through the hard times and easy ones. As a woman, a feminist, and an academic, persistence has multiple layers for me. As someone who has studied the women's movement in the United States throughout much of my academic career, I see persistence in the actions of feminists and feminist organizations. Indeed, their survival was one of the first research puzzles I addressed as an academic in my dissertation on the continuity of feminist chapters ("Social Movement Culture"). I see also persistence in the actions of being an activist. In trying times, it is tempting to let someone else step forward, particularly when a level of

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